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THE NAMING OF INDIANA

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THE NAMING OF INDIANA

PREVIOUS to the opening of the nineteenth century, the present State of Indiana had no history except what it had in common with the surrounding territory. Her geological development, and the other phases of her natural history, did not materially differ from those of Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. Substantially the same conditions produced the soil and the native vegetable and animal life of them all.

When she was occupied by the Mound Builders and the Indians, there were, so far as we can tell, no boundaries to separate her from the adjacent lands. Under the rule of the French, she was sometimes considered a part of New France (Canada), sometimes of Louisiana. On falling into the hands of the English, after the French and Indian War, there were no marks to distinguish her from the rest of the English claims in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, of which she formed a part. After the famous expedition of George Rogers Clark, as a result of which she fell under control of Virginia, she was, for a time, only

part of a county of that proud Commonwealth. This county was called Illinois county. After her transfer by Virginia to the United States, she was included in the Northwest Territory, and still had no separate name or organization.

It was not until the year 1800 that she was christened with her present name; and when she did receive it, she was obliged to share it in common with Michigan until 1805, and with Illinois until 1809. Besides, when at last she had a name all to herself, it was a second-hand one, having been borne by one of her eastern sisters from about 1768 to 1798, a period of thirty years. How the name was obtained and finally lost by its original bearer is substantially as follows:

At the close of the French and Indian War, in 1763, the French having been forced from the Ohio Valley, a Philadelphia trading company was organized to monopolize the Indian trade of that region. This company consisted of twenty-five members, amongst whom George Morgan seems to have been the most active and prominent. As there was no other business at that time equally remunerative, these gentlemen invested a large amount of money in European goods for this trade, and, in the care of agents, a large quantity of them was sent down the Ohio Valley to be exchanged for furs and such other products of the chase as the Indians were accustomed to bring to the trading posts.

In order to understand fully the outcome of this venture, and its relation to the subject in hand, it is necessary to know a little of Indian history. At the time when the English began occupying the Atlantic seaboard of what is now the United States, there dwelt in the present State of New York, to the south of Lakes Ontario and Erie, the powerful and progressive tribes known as the Iroquois. By forming a confederacy, these five or six tribes had abolished that destructive competition among themselves which has always been a bar to the progress of civilization, and, as a consequence of their union, were able to live a settled life. At the time when the permanent European occupation of the United States began, they had a strong and well disciplined army; they built houses, cultivated the fields, planted orchards, engaged in trade, and were developing some of the arts of civilized life and some of the pride and ambition which accompany the awakening of a national spirit. Like the early Romans, they were reaching out a conquering hand in every direction. They had subjugated the tribes of Canada to the north of Lakes Ontario and Erie, and also those of eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and to the southward as far as Tennessee and North Carolina. They treated the conquered people as tributaries, and claimed their lands as their own by the same title as did their more highly civilized white brethren of the Old World, the right of conquest.

With these facts of Indian history in mind, let us now turn our attention again to the agents of the Philadelphia trading company, mentioned above.

In the fall of the year 1763, some Indians of the Shawnee and other tribes, who were tributary to the Iroquois Confederacy, pounced upon the traders on the Ohio River, at a point below the present site of Wheeling, and, overpowering them, seized the goods and appropriated them to their own use. The Philadelphia company, on learning that their agents had been plundered, made complaint to the chiefs of the Six Nations, and demanded pay for their loss. These dusky Romans of the New World, like the Romans of old, feeling themselves responsible for the conduct of their subjects, admitted the justice of the claim; but as the plundered property was valued at nearly half a million dollars, the treasury of the confederacy did not contain sufficient cash to liquidate the debt. But if they had no money, they did claim a large amount of land, and five years later, in 1768, when making a boundary treaty with the English, the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy expressly reserved for the Philadelphia company a tract of nearly 5,000 square miles lying south of the Ohio River and east of the Great Kanawha. It included all of six, and a large part of five other counties within the present State of West Virginia. It was equal in extent to the State of Connecticut, more than twice that of Delaware,

and about four times that of Rhode Island. The company accepted the land in payment of their claim, and received a deed, prepared in due form, and signed by the six chiefs of the confederacy, and witnessed by the Governor and Chief Justice of New Jersey, and by several other gentlemen, representing Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York and the English Crown.

This princely domain must needs have a name. The proprietors were sufficiently scholarly to know how the names of States and countries were frequently made up. They had a number of examples in the Old World; as Wallachia, the land of the Wallachs; Bulgaria, the land of the Bulgars, or Volgars; Suabia, the land of the Suevi; Andalusia, or Vandalusia, the land of the Vandals, etc. But nearer home they had Virginia, the land of the Virgin (Queen Elizabeth); Pennsylvania, Penn's Woodland; Georgia, the land of King George; Carolina, the land of Carolus, or Charles (II); Louisiana, the land of Louis (XIV of France), and so on through a long list. What more natural than that the proprietors should add the termination *a*, signifying *land*, to *Indian*, the name of the people from whom the land was obtained, and thus make up the really euphonious name *Indiana?* This was done and the name applied.

But now another bit of history must be traced in order to learn how the name came to be dropped from

its original possessor and applied to the present State of Indiana.

In 1776 this Indian land was transferred to a new company, known as the "Indiana Land Company," and was then offered for sale; but as the land lay within the existing limits of Virginia, she claimed it as her own by right of her charter. All through the Revolutionary War, and for many years after, the controversy went on between Virginia and the Indiana Land Company. Settlers moved in, and the company demanded pay for the lands occupied by them; but Virginia claimed jurisdiction over the settlers, and forbade the sale of land by the Indiana proprietors.

In 1779 the company petitioned Congress to interfere in its behalf, and such interference was attempted by a Congressional Committee in 1782. But Virginia continued obstinate, and as Congress was at that time operating under the Articles of Confederation, it had no power to compel a State to do anything.

In 1790 the Indiana Company memorialized the Legislature of Virginia, as it had done before, insisting that if the State was determined to hold the land, it should not do so without compensating the company. The proposition was hotly debated in the Virginia Assembly. The proprietors showed that, besides the original cost of the land covered by the cost of the plundered goods, they had spent over $18,000 trying to perfect their title. When the matter was brought

to a vote there was a tie, but the casting vote of the Speaker decided the matter against the company. In 1791 another memorial was presented to the Virginia Legislature, but so far as appears no action was taken on it.

Before this time the Constitution of the United States had been adopted, and the Supreme Court established. The Indiana Company, despairing of justice at the hands of the Virginia Legislature, entered suit in 1792 in the Supreme Court of the United States against the Commonwealth of Virginia for the recovery of their property. The Attorney-General of Virginia was subpœnaed by the United States Marshal to appear before the Court on the 4th of August, 1793, to answer to the complaint of the Indiana Company.

The sentiment of State rights, which so strongly prevailed in the earlier years of our national history, was perhaps more vigorously active in Virginia than anywhere else at the time, and the idea that a proud and sovereign State like the "Old Dominion" should be dragged before any tribunal outside of itself was exceedingly distasteful to her officers. Consequently, when the summons came for her to appear before the United States Supreme Court, she ignored it, declining to appear as defendant in the case of the Indiana Company. Her Legislature adopted a resolution in December, 1793, to the effect that she "is not bound and ought not to appear before the Supreme Federal Court."

She continued to refuse, and concentrated her efforts for securing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and it was successful, as is shown in the Eleventh Amendment, which reads:

"The judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by citizens of another State, or by citizens or subjects of any foreign State."

This amendment received the sanction of both houses of Congress early in 1794, and was sent out to the States for ratification. In the meantime, at the session of the Supreme Court in August, 1796, the case of the Indiana Company was called again, but Virginia did not respond, and before it was again called three-fourths of the States had ratified the proposed amendment (in 1798), and the long-contested case disappeared from the docket, and, as a consequence, the Indiana Land Company lost its claim and itself disappeared from view.

The land in question, having been absorbed by Virginia, had no further use for its separate name, and during the next two years the word Indiana expressed only a reminiscence. In 1800, however, when Congress divided the Northwest Territory, and created the State of Ohio out of the eastern division, it took up the discarded name, Indiana, and applied it to the western division. It has ever since been retained by

that portion which we "Hoosiers" affectionately regard as home.

But how did this word "Hoosier" originate?

THE NICKNAME OF INDIANA.

Since about the year 1830 Indiana has been familiarly known as the Hoosier State, and the people of the State have been called Hoosiers. A number of different explanations of the origin of the term have been given, but no one of them can be said to carry with it the element of certainty. Meredith Nicholson, in his admirable little volume, "The Hoosiers," has collected these together. Briefly, they are as follows:

An Irishman employed in excavating the canal around the falls at Louisville, who declared, after a fight in which he had vanquished several fellow-laborers, that he was a "husher." This was given by Berry R. Sulgrove as a possible origin of the word.

Bartlett, in his "Dictionary of Americanisms," says that the men of superior strength, the heroes of log-rollings and house-raisings, were called "hushers" because of their ability to hush or quiet their antagonists; and that "husher" was a common term for a bully. The Ohio River boatmen carried the word to New Orleans, where a foreigner among them, in attempting to apply the word to himself, pronounced it "Hoosier."

A Louisville baker named Hoosier made a variety of sweet bread that was so much enjoyed by Indiana people that they were called "Hoosier's customers," "Hoosier's men," and so on. Rev. T. A. Goodwin says he first heard the word at Cincinnati in 1830, where it described a species of gingerbread, but without reference to Indiana.

Rev. Aaron Wood, a pioneer Methodist minister, whom the writer of this paper well remembers, says the word is a corruption of Hussar, the corruption originating about as follows: "When the young men of the Indiana side of the Ohio crossed over to Louisville, the Kentuckians made sport of them, calling them "New Purchase Greenies," and boasted of their own superiority. Fighting grew out of these boasts, and an Indianian who had a great admiration for the prowess of the soldiers called Hussars, whipped one of the Kentuckians, and, bending over him, cried, "I'm a Hoosier," meaning "I'm a Hussar."

But, to my mind, the most probable explanation is that the word is a corruption of "Who's here?" In my childhood, in the back woods of Randolph county, I often heard the response, "Who's here?" to the rap on the door late at night, after the "latch string" had been drawn in. The word *here*, however, was pronounced as if in speaking the word *her*, the sound of *y* had been inserted between the *h* and *e*, making it *hyer*. "Who's hyer," or "Who's yer," as it was

generally abridged, was a common response to the rap of the visitor late at night. "Who's yer" easily took the form "Hoosier."

The word first appeared in literature, so far as known, in 1830, in John Finley's poem, "The Hoosier's Nest," written here in this city. It was printed in that year as the New Year's address for the Indianapolis *Journal.* John Finley was a man of more than ordinary culture, who came here from Virginia in 1823; he was at one time Mayor of Richmond, and was the father of Mrs. Wrigley, the accomplished librarian of the Morrisson Library, from its opening until January, 1903.

Since the poem referred to is a Wayne county product, and as it first gave the word "Hoosier" a place in literature, the greater part of it is introduced here as a fitting conclusion to this paper.

THE HOOSIER'S NEST.

Blest Indiana! in thy soil
Are found the sure rewards of toil,
Where honest poverty and worth
May make a Paradise on earth.
With feelings proud we contemplate
The rising glory of our State;
Nor take offense by application
Of its good-natured appellation.
Our hardy yeomanry can smile
At tourists of "the sea-girt isle,"

Or wits who travel at the gallop,
Like Basil Hall or Mrs. Trollope.
'Tis true, among the crowds that roam
To seek for fortune or a home,
It happens that we often find
Empiricism of every kind.
A strutting fop, who boasts of knowledge,
Acquired at some far Eastern college,
Expects to take us by surprise,
And dazzle our astonished eyes.
He boasts of learning, skill and talents
Which, in the scale, would Andes balance;
Cuts widening swaths from day to day,
And in a month he runs away.
Not thus the honest son of toil,
Who settles here to till the soil,
And with intentions just and good,
Acquires an ample livelihood:
He is (and not the little-great)
The bone and sinew of the State.
With six-horse team to one-horse cart,
We hail them here from every part;
And some you'll see, *sans* shoes or socks on,
With *snake-pole* and a yoke of oxen;
Others with pack-horse, dog, and rifle,
Make emigration quite a trifle.
The emigrant is soon located —
In Hoosier life initiated;
Erects a cabin in the woods,
Wherein he stows his household goods.
At first, round logs and clapboard roof,
With puncheon floor, quite carpet-proof,
And paper windows oiled and neat,
His edifice is then complete,
When four clay balls, in form of plummet,
Adorns his wooden chimney's summit.
Ensconced in this, let those who can
Find out a truly happier man.

The little youngsters rise around him
So numerous, they quite astound him ;
Each with an ax or wheel in hand,
And instinct to subdue the land.
Erelong the cabin disappears,
A spacious mansion next he rears ;
His fields seem widening by stealth,
An index of increasing wealth ;
And when the hives of Hoosiers *swarm*,
To each is given a noble faun.
These are the seedlings of the State,
The stamina to make the great.
'Tis true, her population, various,
Find avocations multifarious ;
But having said so much, 't would seem
No derogation to my theme,
Were I to circumscribe the space,
To picture but a single case ;
And if my muse be not seraphic,
I trust you 'll find her somewhat graphic.

I 'm told, in riding somewhere West,
A stranger found a *Hoosier's nest* —
In other words, a buckey cabin,
Just big enough to hold Queen *Mab* in ;
Its situation, low, but airy,
Was on the borders of a prairie ;
And fearing he might be benighted,
He hailed the house, and then alighted.
The Hoosier met him at the door —
Their salutations soon were o'er.
He took the stranger's horse aside,
And to a sturdy sapling tied ;
Then having stripped the saddle off,
He fed him in a sugar-trough.
The stranger stooped to enter in —
The entrance closing with a pin —
And manifested strong desire
To seat him by the log-heap fire,

Where half-a-dozen *Hoosieroons*,
With mush-and-milk, tin-cups and spoons,
White heads, bare feet, and dirty faces,
Seemed much inclined to keep their places.
But madam, anxious to display
Her rough but undisputed sway,
Her offspring to the ladder led,
And cuffed the youngsters up to bed.
Invited shortly to partake
Of venison, milk, and *johnny* cake,
The stranger made a hearty meal,
And glances round the room would steal.
One side was lined with divers garments,
The other spread with skins of *varmints;*
Dried pumpkins overhead were strung,
Where venison hams in plenty hung ;
Two rifles placed above the door —
Three dogs lay stretched upon the floor ;
In short, the domicile was rife
With specimens of Hoosier life.
The host, who centred his affections
On game, and *range*, and quarter sections,
Discoursed his weary guest for hours,
Till Somnus' all-composing powers
Of sublunary cares bereft 'em ;
And then —
No matter how the story ended ;
The application I intended
Is from the famous Scottish poet,
Who seemed to feel as well as know it,
That "buirdly cheils and clever hizzies
Are bred in sic' a way as this is."

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